

Inter-Agency Housing Handbook

U.S. Mission
The Bahamas

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Introduction

Welcome to The Bahamas! This housing book is designed to assist you with understanding how this post manages its housing program and how the post Inter-Agency Housing Board, in conjunction with post management, administers the post housing policy. The manual should also help you maintain accurate and realistic housing expectations as you, and your family, transition to The Bahamas.

If you have any problems or questions, please contact your agency's appropriate Administrative Officer or the GSO Nassau Housing Office. These individuals are ready to assist you in any way they can. We hope you enjoy your assignment to The Bahamas.

Housing Policy

The objective of the overseas housing policy is to provide safe and secure housing which adequately meets the professional and personal requirements of U.S. government employees at a cost most advantageous to the U.S. government. Adequate housing for purposes of this policy statement is defined as: "that comparable to what an employee would occupy in the Washington metropolitan area, with adjustments for family size and locality." The policy outlined herein applies to all employees/agencies under the authority of the Chief of Mission.

The Management Counselor is the Single Real Property Manager (SRPM) for this mission and is assisted by the GSO Housing Section, and the Post Inter-Agency Housing Board (IAHB). All of these entities, to varying degrees, share responsibility on all matters pertaining to housing policy corresponding to U.S. government real property acquired by purchase and/or lease agreement. The goal is to make the Mission Housing Program as successful as possible, in compliance with congressionally mandated limitations (funding and space standards).

The policies governing the housing program are found in 15 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM).

Post Inter-Agency Housing Board (IAHB)

The U.S. Embassy has established the mission's IAHB to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all employees, within the parameters of the housing policy, and to appropriately consider the varied requirements of all agencies when making decisions.

Composition

The Inter-Agency Housing Board (IAHB) consists of personnel representing all U.S. government agencies at post. Agencies' representation on the Board should reflect their respective number of U.S. personnel at post; for example, large agencies may have one permanent representative on the Board, while smaller agencies may represent each other on a rotating basis, may be represented by a larger agency, or may be represented in some other manner as determined by the Chief of Mission (COM) and the principal representatives of the agencies concerned. Members of the Board normally are expected to serve for a year.

IAHB Responsibilities

Under the guidance of the Single Real Property Manager (SRPM), the post IAHB is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the housing policy and standards of 15 FAM and ensures that they are equitably applied to employees of all agencies. The post IAHB should exercise its best collective judgment to reconcile employees' housing requirements with the intent of U.S. Government regulations and to make decisions that are in the best interests of the U.S. Government.

The post IAHB must maintain written records of its meetings, including justifications for decisions. In particular, decisions that are one-time exceptions to policies, procedures, or regulations, such as assignment of housing which is larger than warranted by family size and tier, must be documented and records kept on file at post for 3 years.

Housing Assignment Procedures

Employees of government agencies that participate in the housing pool are normally assigned to residential quarters prior to their arrival. Communication with the employee in advance of their arrival will enable post management and the post IAHB to consider the employee's special needs in making these assignments. GSO proposes assignments to the IAHB, which reviews each proposal and either ratifies or alters it.

GSO will send a Housing Questionnaire out at least 60-90 days in advance of arrival or as soon as information of a pending assignment is made known if less than 60-90 days. The employee will be asked to return the questionnaire within one week.

GSO, in coordination with the Single Real Property Manager (SRPM) at post develops a slate of proposed assignments based on position, grade/rank, authorized family size and, if possible, preferences in the housing questionnaire.

The Housing Board reviews and votes on the slate. At times the board may request that GSO

and SRPM revise the slate. This can be done at the meeting or a new slate can be developed for a future meeting.

An employee's housing tier is based on the grade/rank of the position encumbered, not the personal grade of the employee.

Family size is considered and is based on the number of eligible family members residing permanently (more than fifty percent of the year) at post. To be considered an eligible family member (EFM) for housing purposes, the EFM must be listed on the employee's official travel authorization assigning him/her to post.

Housing tiers are listed below for varying family sizes and positions grades. These allocations, based on the predominant family unit sizes, were designed to provide posts with maximum flexibility in managing the housing program. Also, post shall consider the particular requirements of employees related to physical challenges or factors related to aged or physically challenged eligible family members.

Note: Employee preference, while a viable factor, is considered as the lowest determining factor in view of cost, space, and family size.

In determining appropriate authorizations, the following guidelines apply:

Tandem Employees: If you are a member of a tandem couple, both of whom are assigned to one post, you will be granted the space authorization for the senior member of the tandem; all costs will be shared equally by the respective parent agencies.

Official EFM Residing Away from Post: If you have EFMs residing away from post (i.e. who reside at post less than fifty percent of the year), then your maximum authorization will be increased by 175 square feet (16 square meters) for every two (i.e. one or two) dependents residing away from post, 350 square feet for every four (i.e., three or four), etc. If you are single and have no other EFMs at post, a base authorization for a family of two may be provided in lieu of this allocation for the first two EFMs residing away from post.

Family Members on Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA): For the purposes of this policy, family members on SMA cannot be considered in determining your space authorization. To the extent that post has flexibility within the existing housing profile to accommodate members of your family on SMA, such determinations should be made by the SRPM in conjunction with the post IAHB.

Children of Separated Parents: If you share legal custody of a child or children from a previous marriage and it is anticipated that the child or children will visit post frequently, the maximum authorization will be increased as in Para. 2 above. If you are single and have no

other EFMs at post, a base authorization for a family of two may be provided in lieu of the allocation in Para. 2 above.

Single Parents of Families with Live-In Housekeeper: The U.S. government is not required to provide housing for household staff. To the extent that housing with staff quarters may be available in the post inventory, the SRPM and post IAHB may wish to ensure that the local housing policy will give preference for such housing to a single parent or other families requiring household quarters.

Rank Tiers and Grade Equivalents

EXEC: includes Senior Foreign Service, SES/GS16-18 and Military grades O-7 through O-10.

MID: includes FS-1 and FS-2, GM/GS 13 through 15, Military grades O-5 and O-6.

STD: includes FS-3 through FS-9, GS-12 through GS-5, and O-4 through O-1 (and others).

Space maximum authorizations are:

#Occupants	1-2	3-4	5-6	7+
EXEC (sq. feet) (sq. meters)	1870 (174)	2361 (219)	2712 (252)	2852 (265)
MID (sq. feet) (sq. meters)	1426 (132)	2057 (191)	2408 (224)	2548 (237)
STD (sq. feet) (sq. meters)	1286 (119)	1870 (174)	2174 (202)	2314 (215)

These estimates should not be interpreted as requirements for particular housing units, but as projected maximums for each category. Assignments to housing units that exceed the maximum authorizations listed above require special approval by Washington. **Note that due to the local building trends, particularly in Nassau, housing units generally are well below the maximum space. It is extremely difficult to find units with more than three bedrooms.**

Petitions and Appeals of Post IAHB Decisions

At posts with sufficient **vacant** U.S. Government-held units, **employees may petition the post IAHB** for alternative quarters **prior to occupying** their assigned quarters. Such petitions may not involve the acquisition of new leases and should be limited to prospective reassignment of currently vacant properties already in the housing pool. The SRPM and post IAHB should be careful about granting such petitions and give due consideration to possible increases in maintenance costs,

change in the incidence of cost to agencies (e.g., preoccupancy painting, furnishing, cleaning), or increasing the difficulty for efficient make-ready scheduling.

An appeal is a formal request for a change of quarters that claims that the assigned quarters are unsuitable for the assigned occupant. Employees who wish to appeal an IAHB housing assignment must submit the justification to the post IAHB and the SRPM for review. The memo must contain an explanation of why the assigned quarters are unsuitable and which housing goals or criteria are not being met.

The IAHB will hold the Agency Section Head responsible for assisting his/her employees through initiation of the housing appeal process, and for helping the employee maintain an accurate and realistic expectation of how/why an appeal may be submitted and how/why it may be approved or denied. Employees with less than one year remaining on their tour will normally not be allowed to change quarters.

Appeals must be based on compelling and significant circumstances. Examples include:

- security concerns validated by the Regional Security Office;
- medical necessity/physical challenges validated by the Regional Medical Officer;
- change in family status;
- safety issues;
- work-related operational considerations;
- serious property damage;
- unresolved non-compliant landlord issues.

Appeals based solely on personal preferences will be denied.

The IAHB will meet and will inform the petitioner of its decision. Approved appeals for a change in quarters must be justified in writing, based on identified compelling and significant circumstances. If not resolved, the issue will be submitted to the DCM and/or COM for a decision. If it is still not resolved at post, the employee may appeal directly to his or her parent agency or, if a State Department employee, to the regional bureau executive director for review. Copies of such appeal must be provided to the SRPM who will forward copies to OBO and the regional bureau. The parent agency, in consultation with OBO, must determine whether the issue warrants consideration by the Washington IAHB.

Residential Safety

The Post Occupational Safety and Health Officer (POSHO) certifies that houses are maintained according to safety standards, including properly fenced pools, self-locking gates, and fire safety protection.

Occupancy of Government-Provided Quarters

The employee and the Government share the custodial and maintenance responsibilities for Government-held residential properties, including grounds, buildings, or installed equipment. For U.S. government-owned properties, the Government is responsible for repair of structural defects in the building; repairs due to wear and tear; repairs due to acts of God; repairs not caused by negligence of the employee or members of his/her family, pets, guests, employees or other members of the household. The U.S government –owned properties are the CMR, DCR, Ship Ahoy and the Marine House.

In leased properties, the relationship between Landlord and the Embassy is described below:

There are three roles to be concerned about: The Landlord, the tenant and the occupant. The embassy (tenant) who represents all agencies at post leased residences from the owner (landlord). The Embassy (tenant) is represented by the GSO Housing officer who is responsible for establishing lease agreements and administering them once they are in force. Finally, there are the occupants who are the employees assigned to live in a given residence.

An official, legally binding contractual relationship exists between the Landlord and the tenant. There is not an official relationship between the landlord and the occupant. As such, all matters of substance, particularly any action a landlord would undertake involving maintenance work or improvements on the leased residence is coordinated between the Landlord and the tenant represented by the embassy's housing officer.

Occupants should refer ALL issues regarding their assigned residence through their agency's housing representative and to the embassy's housing office through Nassauhousing@state.gov.

All occupants (employees) should be aware that if they make any arrangements directly with a landlord the employee will be held financially liable for the costs if the landlord were to make a claim against the US Government.

While occupants are permitted to make minor alterations such as hanging pictures, they are not permitted to undertake significant alterations or improvements. The housing office will help you determine if your requests or concerns can be supported under existing government lease agreements, and then forward and represent your desires/concerns to the landlord. Examples of improvements outside of what is considered minor:

- Installing hobby equipment and related hardware.
- Installing bars, room dividers, built-in bookshelves, porches, etc.

- Hanging wallpaper.
- Changing wall colors/trim without changing back to neutral color when departing post.

Requests to make any change to the residence must be received by the Housing Office from the occupant in writing. The Housing Office will then obtain the permission of the landlord to let the occupant make the change. Occupants understand that on departure, the residence must be returned to its original condition.

Occupant Responsibilities

According to 15 FAM 632.2-2a, "Occupants of U.S. Government-held residences are responsible for maintaining them in a presentable condition and returning them to the U.S. Government in a clean and habitable condition."

The occupant is responsible for items normally expected of any occupant leasing residential quarters in the United States. Repairs and service issues should be sent to the Nassau Office NassauHousing@state.gov or your agency's administrator.

Occupant responsibilities include:

- The replacement of light bulbs.
- Pool maintenance if assigned housing with a pool. A maintenance contract is strongly encouraged.
- Replacement of smoke detector batteries.
- It is recommended that occupants should change batteries in smoke detectors when they change their clocks because of Daylight Savings Time.
- Upkeep of furniture and carpets.
- Periodic cleaning of appliances (refrigerators, freezers, ranges, etc.).
- Care of lawns, gardens, walks, driveways, and clearing of rubbish. (for stand-alone residences with exclusive use of lawns and gardens).

The occupant is responsible for maintaining waxed and polished surfaces, for providing any cleaners, waxes and other materials that are required. Hard to remove items such as decals, posters, scotch tape, etc., should not be affixed to walls, closet doors, furniture, etc., as the occupant will be required to either satisfactorily remove these items or bear the financial responsibility for repairs required when they are removed. In addition, since most walls are concrete, care should be taken when hanging pictures, etc. not to damage the walls. Using a drill, anchors and screws are recommended. Any damage to walls will be the occupant's responsibility.

Occupancy Agreement

Post prepares a written statement of occupant responsibilities to be signed upon occupancy of temporary and permanent quarters. This will be included in your welcome packet. This is attached as **Appendix A**, and should be read, signed and returned to the Nassau Housing Office.

Damages

Before departure from post, GSO Housing Office will inspect the premises with the occupant and note any damage for which the occupant will be held responsible. It is reiterated that all damages to structures, grounds or furnishings caused by pets, hobbies, neglect or negligence, or deliberate acts by an occupant, the occupant's family, servants or guests will be the occupant's personal responsibility. (*Detailed information on damages is explained in Surrender of Quarters Section of the handbook, p 23.*)

Use of Quarters during Employee's Absence

During an occupant's absence, non-family members who are not U.S. citizens, and do not have the express authorization of the occupant's agency, the RSO and the SRPM, may not occupy the quarters. The post has the right, for security or safety reasons, to disallow temporary occupancy arrangements the occupant makes and the occupant is responsible for any damage caused by caretakers, guests or servants during the occupant's absence. The occupant may not rent, trade or otherwise exchange Government-provided living quarters for similar accommodations in another location.

Post policy requires that an occupant expecting to be away from the residence for a period of more than five days must notify the RSO and the Nassau Housing office in writing to Nassauoffisland@state.gov specifying the length of absence, if someone will occupy the residential quarters during any portion of this period, the name of the person occupying the quarters and/or if someone will make periodic checks on the residence. Children under 18 years of age must not be left in the quarters without adult supervision.

Occupants expecting to be away from the residence for a period of more than ten days will still be responsible for maintaining the lawn and gardens and must arrange for these services during their absence.

Landlord Responsibilities

The SRPM and GSO Nassau Housing Office is responsible for ensuring the landlord's and Government's compliance with any custodial or maintenance and repair provisions of Government lease terms.

The Landlord shall at their own cost and expense be responsible for all major maintenance, structural work and major repairs including but not limited to appliances, driveways, walkways, fences, gates, patios and including repainting as conditions warrant during the continuance of the lease. The Landlord will also be responsible for the maintenance and repair of structural elements and systems such as walls, ceilings, roofs, floors, foundations, venting, and air-conditioning, plumbing and related fixtures.

The Landlord acknowledges that keeping the premises in good repair and tenantable condition is essential to make them appropriate for use by the U.S. Government.

Transient Housing

Every effort is made to have permanent housing ready for immediate occupancy upon arrival at post. When this is not possible, temporary accommodations will be arranged in coordination with the parent agency.

Privately Leased Quarters

Privately leased housing acquired by civilian employees under the Living Quarters Allowance (LQA) program and military personnel program is governed by the same space standards as U.S. Government-held housing and must meet the residential security standards outlined in 12 FAM 330 and POSHO. Units proposed for private leases must be approved in advance by the post IAHB and the RSO following the 12 FAM procedures.

Regulations governing Living Quarters Allowances are in the Standardized Regulations Chapter 130 and the rates are listed in Section 920.

Inventory of Furniture, Furnishings, Appliances and Equipment

All housing units leased in Nassau and Freeport are rented furnished. The furniture, furnishings and appliances are the property of the Landlord. The lease agreements in use establish that the contents of the residence shall stay in place. Removal and storage of items are seldom approved due to high costs.

If an occupant is willing to pay for removal and storage through funding from their parent agency or with their own funds, the housing office will request this of the Landlord. However, the Landlord has unilateral right of refusal on this issue and may deny the request.

Because leased residences are furnished by the Landlord, usually from local sources, the basic FAM guidelines for furnishings do not fully apply at this post. Instead, the standard applied is whether or not the residence is adequately and reasonably furnished based on the

number of authorized persons on the orders or travel authorization.

Employees are strongly urged not to ship furniture and furnishings beyond those items the employee and family members need to make a house a home.

Upon Arrival

The Nassau Housing Office will provide the employee with an inventory of the furniture, furnishings, appliances and equipment in the housing unit. The employee should carefully review the inventory, note any discrepancies, sign it and return it to the Housing Coordinator. It is important that discrepancies are officially noted, in writing, at the beginning of the employee's use of the residence. This includes the condition of the furnishings and furniture. The signed inventory is the document used to determine whether an item has undergone normal wear and tear and any disputes about the initial condition of an object will be decided by consulting the initial inventory. Additionally, any damages or problems with furnishings should be reported to GSO when the damages occur so that the inventory can be annotated.

Upon Departure

Prior to departure from post, the Housing Coordinator will conduct a final inventory and will compare it with the initial inventory. Departing employees should arrange for the residence quarters inspection with the GSO Housing Coordinator at least 30 days before departure. The occupant will be informed in writing of any damage considered to be beyond normal wear and tear. Charges for lost or damaged landlord-owned furnishings will be at the replacement cost or an amount negotiated with the landlord. The occupant is expected to pay for damages before departing post. (*See Surrender of Quarters for damage assessment procedures*).

Maintenance

General Maintenance

Occupants are responsible for routine maintenance as described in the occupant responsibility section. Landlords are responsible for maintaining the residence in tenable condition. This includes repairing and replacing things as needed in order to maintain tenability. If you have a maintenance problem:

Contact GSO Nassau Housing Office at Nassauhousing@state.gov or your parent agency's administrative representative .

If you have an emergency (life or safety issue) during non-working hours, contact the General Services Officers:

Rich Woodhouse (242) 422-3072
Ana Baide (242) 427-7582

The GSO Nassau Housing Office will coordinate maintenance issues with the landlords and occupants. The housing office asks for cooperation with occupants and parent agencies when coordinating access for repairs.

An emergency is defined as a problem that, if not resolved quickly, would endanger Embassy employees or cause physical damage to property. Examples include:

- Fire
- A severe water leak
- Flooding

The following are examples of issues not considered emergencies:

- A burnt fuse or thrown circuit breaker.
- Loss of hot water
- A loss of water pressure
- Any routine repairs

General Information for Occupants

Hospitality / Welcome Kits

Occupants are generally provided with hospitality or welcome kits until receipt of household goods. Please refer to your parent agencies for a list of items provided in your welcome kit. Welcome kits must be returned within 14 days after receiving your shipment of household goods (HHE, HHG).

In addition, welcome kits can be provided to occupants after pack-out if they have not yet departed post.

Occupants will be charged for damaged or broken welcome kit items.

Utilities and Bills

The occupant's parent agency, through the Embassy, pays the electric, water, and propane cooking gas. Occupants must ensure that meter readers have access to the property.

It is the occupant's responsibility to pay all costs associated with telephone, cable TV, Internet or

satellite dishes.

The GSO Housing Office will assist you in locating the fuse boxes/circuit breakers and water-turn off valves in case of emergencies.

Residential Telephones

All of the housing units are required to have a working landline. It is the responsibility of the occupant to pay the monthly telephone bill including all fees, service charges and other bills associated with telephone usage. Your welcome packet will contain the account information, and the bills must be paid directly to Bahamas Telephone Company (BTC). These accounts and numbers are in the owner/landlord's name. Please do not change the account name. Occupants must furnish their own telephone equipment.

If your telephone is not working or has been disconnected, notify the GSO Nassau Housing Office immediately. This affects your alarm system as it is connected to the telephone line.

Long distance rates to the United States and other countries from The Bahamas are quite high, although direct dial long distance is available. Be sure to keep in mind that most 800 numbers are only toll free in the United States.

Residential Keys

Post provides two complete sets of keys upon occupancy of permanent quarters; the occupant must sign for these keys. Additional sets can be acquired independently at one's personal expense.

All existing sets of keys and alarm keypads must be surrendered to the GSO Nassau Housing Office on departure from post.

Satellite Dishes/Cable Television

The costs of satellite dishes and cable television are the occupant's responsibility. Cable Bahamas is the only company offering cable TV and the occupant should establish an account in their name on arrival and have the service disconnected before departure since the U.S. Government cannot pay any costs associated with cable TV.

Internet Service

Signing up for internet service is the occupant's responsibility. Currently, at least three companies offer Internet services. No additional phone lines at U.S. Government expense can be provided for Internet services.

Appliances

Occupants are responsible for periodic cleaning of appliances. Contact the GSO Nassau Housing Office for any repairs.

Propane Cooking Gas

Some residences are supplied with propane cooking gas. Occupants will be provided telephone contacts in order to arrange for deliveries.

Generators

Portable generators are currently provided through parent agencies.

Employees who have generators should start them at least once a month to ensure that they are in good working order.

Electric Current

The electrical supply in Nassau and Freeport is the same as in the United States. -- 110 volts/60 cycles for normal wall outlets, 220 volts for heavy-duty appliances (washers, dryers, etc.). Telephone lines are not grounded.

Nassau has a slightly higher rate of power outages or brownouts than most U.S. cities. Water breaks or drops in water pressure are common. We strongly urge occupants to use surge protectors for sensitive electronic equipment such as TV's, home theatre systems, computers, or any costly personal electronics.

Pest Control

The State Department's Integrated Pest Management Program is responsible for pest control measures in the residences. Occupants must refer to the "Pest Management in Your Home" guidebook in their GSO Housing Office Welcome Packet.

Occupants are responsible for pest avoidance measures such as proper housekeeping and appropriate pet care.

No one can order fumigations/exterminations without first consulting with Post's Occupational and Health Safety Officer (POSHO).

Please report any problems with pests to the GSO Nassau Housing Office.

Lawns and Gardens

If you have lawns or gardens that are for your **exclusive** use (typically in single homes), you are responsible for keeping them up. All gardens and yards are given a thorough cleaning before you move in. During your occupancy, it is expected that the exterior grounds will be kept neat and presentable and preventive measures will be taken to ensure that lawns and shrubs are maintained and kept up.

It is illegal in The Bahamas to cut down or remove trees. Additionally, if you live in a lease property, you should refrain from major landscaping changes such as removing or moving shrubs, bushes or plants. If you desire to have landscaping changes made, approach the housing office and we will assist you with requesting this of your landlord.

Servants' Quarters

The U.S. Government is not required to provide housing for your household staff.

Parking and Garaging of Motor Vehicles

If your residence does not include a parking space for one privately owned vehicle, post is authorized to lease one parking space for you at Government expense. There is no requirement that housing units come with a garage. Many do not. In addition, the U.S. Government is not required to ensure that you have a housing unit with a boat dock nor access to a boat dock.

Hobbies

U.S. Government regulations reserve the right to limit or prohibit those hobbies that constitute an abnormal strain or overload on the grounds, structures or utility services of residences if they could cause an increase in operating or maintenance cost. Some examples of hobbies that may be prohibited are ceramics or pottery requiring the use and operation of electric kilns, setting up greenhouses or gardening projects that would require heating or abnormal amounts of water, etc.

Pets

FAM guidelines: "The keeping of pets in Government-held housing units is a privilege and not a right. The SRPM may prohibit pets on Government held premises because of nuisance, health, and damage to Government property, infringement of quiet enjoyment or other fair and just reasons." (15 FAM 245)

Many of the residences we lease do not allow dogs or have restriction on size, breed, and leashing requirements. Employees contemplating bringing pets to post, especially dogs should

have back-up plans. Please note that pet based request are considered personal preference requests and it is not always possible to factor them into every assignment.

Pets and fair wear and tear as quoted from the FAM: "Damages to structures, grounds or furnishings by pets shall not be construed as normal wear and tear and will be the personal responsibility of the occupant. No alteration, renovation or construction shall be undertaken at government expense on Government-held property for the benefit of pets. Before any alteration, renovation, or construction at personal expense is undertaken, written permission is required from the SRPM. The property must be restored upon vacating the quarters."

The following types of damage are examples of damage caused by pets that occupants are typically charged for:

- Urine and feces stains on rugs, carpeting, parquet floors and furniture.
- Snags, pulls, tears, rips on rugs, carpets, draperies, sheers, furniture and insect screens.
- Scratching and clawing marks on rugs, carpets, draperies, sheers, furniture, woodwork, wood doors and parquet floors.
- Tooth and chew marks on woodwork or furniture, breakage, odors Tick and flea infestations.
- Damage to gardens and **shrubs**.

Employees are reminded that they are financially responsible for all damages caused to residences by their pets. In addition, employees are also responsible for ensuring that their pets do not become neighborhood nuisances. Our post policy mirrors pet ordinances enforced by the District of Columbia municipal government, the Montgomery County, MD, government, and the U.S. Naval housing authorities. Post policy regarding pets is as follows:

A. Pets shall not be a significant Housing Board consideration when making housing assignments.

B. Acceptable pets for government housing include dogs, cats, aquatic life in aquariums, small pets in cages (e.g., birds, hamsters, gerbils, mice, turtles, frogs, lizards).

Unacceptable pets include "canine pit breeds," domesticated farm animals, wild animals, and venomous species.

C. Pet owners are required to have their pets vaccinated and registered in accordance with local requirements. (Any questions can be answered by your veterinarian.)

D. No pet (dog, cat, bird, etc.) shall disturb the quiet (as a result of excessive noise) or physical enjoyment of any person.

E. Dogs maintained within multi-unit compounds will be kept on a secure leash while being walked on common property. Voice control is not considered adequate. Owners must clean up after the pet's waste in common areas.

F. Dogs may be confined within a fenced yard as long as the dog is confined in a manner which will not allow it to bite, menace, or be a nuisance to persons on the other side of the fence. Dogs of any size exhibiting threatening or menacing behavior must be collared and leashed to a firm, securely-anchored stake or otherwise maintained in an enclosure such that they do not pose a hazard to visitors or guard personnel. (Employees may submit a written request for permission to construct a fence or other constraining area for a pet. However, approval will be granted only with the landlord's and neighbors' consent).

G. Regarding biting or dangerous/aggressive behavior: Dogs that bite individuals or that exhibit dangerous or aggressive behavior in otherwise normal circumstances will not be tolerated. A single complaint of animal biting or attacking may require the immediate removal of the animal. A second such incident will automatically require removal.

H. Cat owners have a responsibility to ensure that their pets do not become a nuisance to their neighbors by wandering into the neighbors' houses, disturbing gardens, and the like.

I. Animals kept in such numbers that cause health problems, attract other animals, or create a nuisance must be removed from the premises.

J. An employee who has a legitimate complaint about pet(s) in his/her immediate neighborhood should first discuss the problem with the pet owner. (Some examples of legitimate complaints are excessive noise, menacing behavior, outdoor unleashed or unattended pets, and failure to clean up after a pet's waste in common areas.) If the problem persists, a memo outlining the nature of the complaint may also be forwarded to the Administrative Counselor (for all employees except USAID) or to the USAID Executive Officer (USAID employees). The pet owner will be contacted and asked to comply with post policy. Three complaints may result in the loss of pet privileges and the requirement to remove the animal from the premises.

K. Increasing the number or type of pets after arrival in country must be approved by the Housing Office and the SRPM.

L. The GSO Housing office will conduct a pet-damage survey 60 days prior to occupants' departure from post. Damages beyond normal wear and tear (including extensive cleaning of carpets, upholstery, and draperies) will be assessed. Occupants will be required to pay for damages within 14 days after receiving notification.

Businesses in Residences

New positive rules on using government housing for family members who wish to work out of their USG leased or owned properties were issued in January, 2000 (State 004193). A bilateral work agreement is in place in The Bahamas. The Human Resources Office can answer any questions. A local business would also be subject to local taxes. The new 15FAM 246.2 follows:

“a. The Department fully supports the desire of many spouses and family members to secure employment while posted abroad. Spouses and family members of employee occupants of U.S. Government-held or living quarters allowance/overseas housing allowance (LQA/OHA) housing may use the housing for the conduct of a private business for personal financial gain, provided that such conduct conforms to the provisions of paragraphs b or c in this section.

b. Such housing may be used for activities that foster cultural understanding between the embassy community and the local community and/or provide a benefit to mission employees or families, as determined by the COM.

c. Such housing may be used for commercial activities if approved by the COM or, in the case of an ambassador's residence, by the relevant regional bureau assistant secretary in response to a written request. The chief of mission or assistant secretary shall approve such requests where:

(1) As set forth in 3 FAM 4125, the proposed activity would meet the following standards:

(a) It would not violate any law of the host country;

(b) It would not require or entail a waiver of diplomatic privileges or immunities deemed unacceptable broad by the chief of mission or assistant secretary, and

(c) It would not otherwise damage the interests of the United States as determined by the COM or Assistant Secretary:

(2) The COM or Assistant Secretary, determines that the proposed activity is appropriate, taking into account local customs and norms, post security and other relevant considerations, and whether the activity would adversely affect the work of the post.

(3) The proposed activity does not require substantial use of the housing by non-U.S. Government employees and their families (e.g., retail sales from a residence would not be permitted, but individual piano lessons or tutoring may be allowed in appropriate cases) or, in the case of use of the ambassador's residence, the proposed activity does not involve any use of the residence by non-U.S. Government employees and their families;

(4) If determined to be necessary by the Management Counselor (SRPM) at post to protect the Department from significantly increased risk of liability, the occupant obtains liability insurance covering the proposed use or presence in the residence by non-U.S.

Government employees and their families;

(5) The chief of mission or assistant secretary determines that the proposed commercial activities of the spouse or family member would not create a conflict or appearance of conflict of interest with the U.S. Government employee's duties; and

(6) The person who will conduct the commercial activities provides assurances that the business will comply with all relevant local legal requirements (e.g., licenses, work permits, and similar regulations).

d. If any commercial activity approved under either paragraphs b or c of this section causes increased operating or continuing maintenance costs to the U.S. Government, the occupant must pay the increased costs attributable to such use. Costs for installation of any equipment as well as for returning the property to former condition are borne by the occupant. In addition, notwithstanding paragraphs b and c of this section, under no circumstances will a commercial activity be approved that requires the regular presence of employees of the spouse or family member in the residence. Finally, the COM or the Assistant Secretary may at any time revoke approval of a commercial activity approved pursuant to this section, if any of the standards set forth above are no longer met.”

Noise

"Quiet enjoyment" is a right and responsibility of all occupants. Please be considerate of your neighbors and remember that you are a guest in their country.

Smoke Detectors and Fire Extinguishers

All government-owned and leased residential units have fire extinguishers and smoke detectors installed. You should be familiar with the location and operation of all fire-related equipment. If you discover that an extinguisher is missing, believe it is inoperable, or need assistance in learning to operate it, please notify the GSO Nassau Housing Office.

Smoke detectors in all residences should be checked once a year. The alkaline batteries last approximately one year and should be replaced when the detector begins to beep intermittently. *It is recommended that occupants change batteries in smoke detectors when they change their clocks because of Daylight Savings Time.*

Escape Grills

In accordance with fire and safety regulations, occupied bedrooms with grills below the fourth floor must have a secondary means of escape.

Potable Water

It is recommended that occupants do not drink city water, the water is not potable. Parent agencies provide coupons to purchase water in either 5-gallon bottles or 20-oz plastic bottles. (Check with your agency's financial administrator).

Pools

Some houses come with private swimming pools. The occupant is responsible for the pool's upkeep. It is strongly recommended that occupants hire a pool maintenance contractor to provide the services.

All leased property pools have a barrier (fence or wall) surrounding the pool built to the Safety Health and Environmental Management (SHEM) standards and requirements. Pool- fencing gates must be kept closed and locked at all times. Pools are inspected periodically to ensure requirements are met.

Residential Security Guidelines

The Nassau threat for crime as determine by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security is rated as CRITICAL. This is the highest crime rating. As a result all residences are outfitted with security equipment to include window grills and security alarm systems to meet the standards established by the Overseas Security Policy Board. The current crime rating for Freeport, Grand Bahama is rated as HIGH.

All residential security related concerns should be routed through the Regional Security Office (RSO) Residential Security Coordinator.

Surrender of Quarters - Departure from Post

Packing Out – Furniture & Furnishings

It is your responsibility to ensure that no landlord- or government-provided furniture and furnishings are packed during pack-out.

SURRENDER OF QUARTERS AND DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

When you depart post and/or surrender your quarters, you are responsible for turning over the quarters in a neat, presentable condition.

Damages to structures, grounds or furnishings caused by pets, hobbies, neglect or negligence, or deliberate acts by an occupant, the occupant's family, servants or guests will be the occupant's personal responsibility.

Damages by pets will never be considered normal wear and tear.

The GSO Housing Office will conduct an initial inspection 30 days from the scheduled vacancy date in order to assess damages or repairs of furniture, furnishings, appliances, and property that are above normal wear and tear. A final inspection will take place after your personal household effects have been packed and removed.

If damages are noted at that time, you must repair or replace damaged items before the final inspection.

These damages will be referred to post's Property Survey Board for approval.

If you do not repair any damages before departing, then the Accountable Property Officer will submit an inspection evaluation report containing the cost of replacement or repair of the reported damages to Post's Property Survey Board for approval. A notice of the cost of all damages will be sent through to you. Payments must be made to the Embassy cashier prior to departing post.

In the event the employee disagrees with the determination of the GSO regarding the damage assessment, they can appeal to the Property Survey Board which is composed of representatives of the various agencies assigned to the Embassy. In the case of disagreement with the findings of the board, an appeal can be made to the COM, whose decision is final.

Please refer to **Appendix B** for Surrender of Residence/Quarters Procedures.

APPENDIX A

RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY AGREEMENT U.S. EMBASSY NASSAU, THE BAHAMAS

Occupant Name _____

Address _____

Date of arrival at Post _____

This must be read, signed, and returned to the Housing Office.

In accordance with 15 FAM 632.2 and 15 FAM 240, occupants of U.S. Government living quarters are responsible for maintaining their residential unit and contents (furniture, furnishings, appliances and equipment) in presentable condition and returning them to the government in clean and habitable condition. Damages to structures, grounds, or furnishings caused by pets, hobbies, neglect or negligence of the employee, or deliberate acts or other unusual actions of the employee occupant, family, servants, employees, guests, pets, or other members of the employee's household will be the personal responsibility of the employee.

Each U.S. Government employee occupying USG owned or leased accommodations must read and sign this document to indicate that he/she understands and accepts the responsibility for the care and upkeep of the residential property to which he/she is assigned, has read the Housing Handbook and understands Embassy housing policy. Resident responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

- a) Replacing light bulbs, smoke detector batteries, replacing water system filters, cleaning household appliances
- b) Operating the air conditioning and heating at a simple level, cleaning and replacing air filters regularly if these are accessible;
- c) Handling normal gardening procedures such as trimming and cutting grass, bushes and shrubs;
- d) Regular swimming pool cleaning and regular maintenance
- e) Repairing carpentry, electrical, and plumbing that is caused by the occupant's neglect. This includes blocked toilets.

Maintenance on all properties must be reported to the Nassau Housing Office or the Freeport Housing Assistant.

I, the undersigned have read this Post Occupancy Agreement and the Housing Handbook and understand my responsibilities with regard to government furnished quarters and furnishings that are provided therein. I agree to return my residence and its contents to the U.S. Government in clean and habitable condition.

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B

SURRENDER OF RESIDENCES/QUARTERS - PROCEDURES

Departure Date - Confirm the departure date from the residences with the GSO Nassau Housing office at least 30 days prior to vacating the residence. The Housing Office will also coordinate an inspection after personal household effects have been removed.

Costs of any damages incurred will be provided to occupant/employees in writing through the GSO Nassau Housing Office and the IAHB. Damages must be paid before departure from post.

Telephone and Cable Bills - Occupant is responsible for paying the final telephone and cable bills. (Telephone bill that must include payment through the next billing cycle). Provide a receipt to the housing office.

Household Inventory - will be verified and signed by both the occupant and the Housing Office. Missing and/or damaged items will be identified.

Residential Lawns and Gardens – Occupant having exclusive gardens and lawns are responsible for turning over the garden in a neat and presentable condition. Damages caused by pets or children to shrubs, trees, outside structures, etc. will be assessed.

Water Bottles – Coordinate the return of unused coupons and water bottles with the GSO Nassau Housing Office.

All trash and left-over items from the bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, and garages **MUST** be thrown away. Additional trash-removal fees will incur if occupants leave trash and unused items in the residences.

Keys – Turn in all keys to the GSO Nassau Housing Office on the employee's day of departure.

Departure Cleaning of Residence: The checklist below will prove helpful to occupants both at the time of periodic house cleaning during occupancy and prior to departure.

- ☐ Dust and clean ceiling fans, floors, walls, woodwork, bathrooms, kitchen cabinets and stove.
- ☐ Rugs – Vacuumed.
- ☐ Wood Furniture - Clean and polish.
- ☐ Upholstered Furniture - Vacuum upholstery.
- ☐ Refrigerators and Freezers – Remove all food, and clean spillage.
- ☐ Kitchen Cabinets – Remove all articles.
- ☐ Drawers and Closets– Remove all personal articles.

Approved: CDA: LJohnson

Drafter: GSO: ABaide, x4275

Clearer: MGT: JHigi - ok

Clearer: A/DCM: NBrown ok